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### O Come our Wisdom from on High- An Introduction into Wisdom Christology

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY: ST. LOUIS

O COME OUR WISDOM FROM ON HIGH:  
AN INTRODUCTION INTO WISDOM  
CHRISTOLOGY

A SEMINAR PAPER SUBMITTED TO  
DR. NORMAN NAGEL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EXEGESIS/SYSTEMATICS

BY

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NIAGARA, ND  
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## Introduction

Veni, O Sapientia, // Quae hic disponis omnia; // Veni, viam prudentiae // Ut doceas et gloria[e] // Gaude! Gaude! Emmauel // Nascetur pro te, Israel.

Oh, come, our Wisdom from on high // Who ordered all things mightily; // To us the path of knowledge show, // And teach us in her ways to go. // Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.<sup>1</sup>

These are the opening words to stanza two of the famous Advent hymn, “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel,” as it is printed in *Lutheran Worship*. The hymn is based upon a Latin hymn of the twelfth century A.D.,<sup>2</sup> following the pattern of the Advent “O Antiphons.” The antiphons, written in the ninth century A.D., are said to be based on the Messianic names found within Scripture and an exposition on that name as applied to Christ.

However, Dr. Won Yong Ji, a professor at Concordia Seminary: St. Louis, has raised a few questions about this stanza, “Was it appropriate for *Lutheran Worship* to include this verse given the debates between orthodox Christianity and Feminism on the gender of God and *Sophia*, or Lady Wisdom? Does this stanza not lend itself to misunderstanding, and is it possibly heretical?”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Ji’s questions raise valid concerns in light of the debates on the gender of God and Sophia not only with Feminists, but also among the various groups of Christians themselves. Is there a proper Biblical basis for this stanza? If so, how is this stanza to be understood properly within Scriptural parameters? This stanza and Dr. Ji’s perceptive questions show that the topic

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<sup>1</sup> *Lutheran Worship*, as prepared by the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1982; “Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel,” #31, text from *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Koln, 1710; translated by John M. Neale, 1818-66 alt.

<sup>2</sup> *Worship and Service Hymnal*, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” #24, Hope Publishing Company, Chicago, IL, 1963. It should be noted that this is a Presbyterian hymnal.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted verbatim from Dr. Won Yong Ji in a graduate level course on Missiology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Jan. 1995, in reaction to *Concordia Student Journal*, which had devoted several articles to Wisdom Literature and Christology. See Ralph Shorey, “Wisdom, Christology, and the Nicene Creed,” *Concordia Student Journal*, Vol. 18, Number 1, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Thanksgiving 1994, 4-12 and Paul Wenz, “Sophia & Feminism,” *Concordia Student Journal*, Vol. 18, Number 1, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Thanksgiving 1994, 14-23.

of Wisdom Christology should not be considered an obscure topic. We have only to consider the recent debates inside and outside of American Christianity on the perceived gender of God, where the most highly publicized example is the Reimaging Conference held in Minneapolis in 1993.<sup>4</sup> At the conference, God was seen and worshipped in varying degrees of female/feminine terms. Thus a clear need exists to probe the background of Biblical Wisdom Literature and Christology given these conditions within American Christianity.

The purpose of this paper is not to tackle directly all the varying presuppositions held by Feminists in connection with Sophia Christology. Paul Wenz, in the Thanksgiving, 1994 issue of Concordia Student Journal has written an excellent article concerning this point.<sup>5</sup> Instead, this paper will deal with the following: (1) The general meaning of “wisdom” as it is commonly understood in Scripture, (2) an analytical study of Proverbs 8:22-35 in order to see how Scripture has appropriated the name of Wisdom to Christ, and (3) a brief survey of Early Church History up to the Nicene Creed of 325 A.D. to see how “Wisdom Literature” affected greatly the Church’s confession of Christ as the “Wisdom of God.” By focusing on these issues, this writer will provide an introductory survey for those who are either unacquainted or have little background with the complex exegetical, historical, and systematic/dogmatic issues that are connected with “Wisdom Christology” and today’s debates.

### Word Study

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for “wisdom” comes from the root *chkm*. In addition to the verb, nouns and adjectives are also used on this root. The verb, *chkm* occurs 26

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<sup>4</sup> Reaffirmed by Dr. Gene Veith at a lecture on, “Preaching in the Post-Modern Era,” to the ND District Pastors’ Conference, April 13, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Wenz, “Sophia & Feminism,” 14-23. His article dealt with how Christian feminists have viewed *Sophia* and how that impacts the perceived gender of God debates today.

times. The adjective *chakam* appears 135 times. The most common form that appears, however, is the feminine noun *chokmah*, which occurs in 147 instances.<sup>6</sup>

Most words of the root occur in the so-called Wisdom Literature (i.e. Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes), where the word appears 180 times (*chkm* -- 18 times, *chakam* -- 76 times, *chokmah* -- 86 times). However, the word in its various forms is also found 73 times in the historical books, 41 times in the prophets, 13 times in the Psalms, and 5 times elsewhere in Scripture. As such, *chkm* is an important theme within the Old Testament canon. Forher, in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (hereafter *TDNT*), is certainly correct when he notes that the translation of “wise” or “wisdom” is an unfortunate one that does not cover the range of meanings that *chkm* has.<sup>7</sup> The word has several different meanings when used in relationship to man, as opposed to that of God.

When *chkm* is used in relationship to man there are at least ten different meanings to the word, most of which can be grouped into four major categories. First, *chkm* is used to describe those with some kind of skill. Sometimes it refers to those who practice magic. A good example are the *chokameyah* of Pharaoh in Gen. 41:8, who are wisemen skilled in interpreting dreams. *Chakam* can also refer to skill of an artistic or technical nature such as when Uri ben-Hur, in Ex. 31:3 fashions the Ark of the Covenant with his metalsmithing skills. However, in some instances, it can also denote the ability to govern well (e.g. Eccl. 4:13, Is. 10:13).<sup>8</sup>

Second, *chkm* can also refer to an attitude of cleverness in self-preservation. The sense of cleverness is in terms of its possession or lack thereof, which can be seen in the animal world. For example, the ostrich in Job 39:13-17 lacks *chokmah*, while other creatures like ants, rock

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<sup>6</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 7, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988,476.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 483-484.

badgers, locusts and lizards in Proverbs 30:24-28 are considered extremely clever. The examples of all these creatures point to “. . . a non-moral cleverness and skill deployed in self-preservation.” These examples, according to Scripture, have valuable lessons to teach society and are demonstrated in many instances. However, human cleverness in wisdom is generally hurtful to others. For instance, in Exodus 1:10, the Egyptians seek to use their wisdom to preserve their society against the despised Israelites by forcing them into slave labor, a move which ultimately shows their lack of wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of piety, *chokmah* refers to ethical conduct connected with worship. For instance, an unwise man offends against God (Dt. 32:6). Meanwhile, the wise one understands the words of the Lord (Hos. 14:10), perceives his own sin (Ps. 51:5) and seeks to attain the way in which life is defined by Yahweh (Ps. 90:12). The wiseman’s perspective on life, as Forher notes, “Is the basis of true faith and trust (Ps. 90:12).”<sup>10</sup>

When *chokmah* is understood in terms of piety it is connected with “the fear of YHWH.” An often quoted expression that occurs within Biblical Wisdom Literature is that “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”<sup>11</sup> However, the fear of the LORD and wisdom are not one and the same when it comes to piety. The fear of Yahweh has more of a sense of religious devotion, respect for Yahweh and faith in Him than does *chokmah*. However, the fear of the LORD is the starting point for wisdom where life is disciplined in terms of refraining from evil and doing good as prescribed by Yahweh. *Chokmah* takes the faith relationship to Yahweh and then applies it to life. For where this faith relationship is practiced then wisdom and valuable

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<sup>9</sup> Forher, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 484.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 111:10, Prv. 9:10

insight to life is gained.<sup>12</sup> One is wise who lives in such a lifestyle, i.e., in the fear of the Lord. Thus, in this setting, *chokmah* is the outcome or result of the fear of Yahweh.

*Chokmah* is understood a third way in terms of culture and society. Wisdom here constitutes those aspects of society that pertain to the practical control of the natural world, or to a well-rounded body of instruction by which life principles form the core of instruction.<sup>13</sup> This aspect of *chokmah*, however, is not highly emphasized in biblical Wisdom literature, although evidence for it can be found in such places as Ps. 104, Prv. 30:15-33, Eccl. 2:12-21. The reason for this de-emphasis seems to come from Eccl. 2:13-15,

I saw that wisdom has the advantage over darkness. The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I knew that one lot falls to both of them. So I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me also, why then should I be wise? Where is the profit for me? And I concluded in my heart that this too is vanity.

*Chokmah* in this respect has advantages inasmuch as it helps one lead a happy and disciplined life. However since death, "the same lot," can befall the wise and foolish man, earthly wisdom is limited in its advantages. It must give way to something greater, which is seen in the final aspect of *chokmah* when used in relationship to man.

On rare occasions, *chokmah* is called an eschatological blessing and an apocalyptic gift. "In Is. 33:6 *chokmah* and *da'ath* are Zion's riches of salvation and the fear of Yahweh its treasure."<sup>14</sup> In this respect *chokmah* mirrors those qualities found to describe piety and the fear of Yahweh. However, this gift of *chokmah* comes as a result of the promised Messiah. In Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit of YHWH falls upon this ruler who has the authority to execute God's will on earth.<sup>15</sup> Why? Because, as the text states, the following blessings rest (*nuach*) upon or remain

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<sup>12</sup> Forher, "Sophia," *TDNT*, 487.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 485, 488.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 488.

within him, “. . . the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge (*chokmah*) and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.” In other words, because the Spirit of Yahweh rests upon this Messiah, he not only has these gifts of *chokmah* and fear of the LORD, but he possesses these virtues to such a degree that he is the embodiment of them all as he bestows them through his rule.

In relationship to man then, the Old Testament’s primary use of *chakam/chokmah* is in terms of piety where one lives in a right relationship with society and with Yahweh. Through *chakam/chokmah* one obtains a mastery over the world that leads to a happy and cultured life, plus the right disposition towards Yahweh. However, whether it is living in relationship with God or man, *chakam/chokmah* is nevertheless a gift from Yahweh Himself that is ultimately seen in the coming Messiah.

*Chakam/chokmah* is not used very often of Yahweh. However, it is noted that God possesses wisdom. This occurs relatively early in Scripture when the angel of God in 2 Sam. 14:20 is said to be wise.<sup>16</sup> Isaiah develops this theme more explicitly throughout his book (19:15; 28:23-29; 29:14; 31:1f; 40:13f). Because God possesses wisdom, He is able to impart all kinds of counsel. The reason this is possible is because, as Fohrer notes,

. . . God as the Creator who has made all things wisely, i.e., with technical and artistic mastery. . . understands how to make the clouds float in the sky even though they are laden with water. . . and counts them with a skilfull hand so that they may come in due measure and do not bring too much or too little rain.

Furthermore,

God’s *chokmah* is also His mysterious action corresponding to man’s ethical conduct according to the principle of retributive justice. It is the codification of the principles of righteous human conduct in the law code of Ezra (Ezra 7:25) and the declaration of the mysteries of the future (Da. 2:20f.; 5:11,14). Since He has no rival with similar skill and ability among the peoples (Jer. 10:7), and since especially He has the might and power to actualise what He has thought out and skilfully planned . . . no human understanding

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<sup>16</sup> Fohrer, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 489.



can stand against Him, Prv. 21:30. He confounds all the human cleverness which withstands His will, Is. 19:11-15; 29:14; 31:2f.<sup>17</sup>

The important element of Yahweh possessing wisdom is that it is the means by which He creates and sustains the universe. In the anthology, *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, James Crenshaw notes the following themes that play an important role with respect to Creation theology and Wisdom Literature:

1. Creation Theology in Wisdom Literature is an overarching theme, but never seen apart from redemption.<sup>18</sup> There is much debate amongst scholars in this area regarding the extent of this relationship, particularly when applied to Wisdom Literature, although the relationship itself is never denied.

2. While this is so, Creation Theology becomes important in view of the threat of Chaos. There is a need for understanding of how to order things within the cosmic, political, and social realms. Why? For the order established at the beginning by the Creator is in constant jeopardy of breakdown. Creation theology in Wisdom Literature shows how God preserves his creation through *creatio continua*. The Book of Proverbs is an excellent example of what kind of order should exist within the world as all aspects of order are discussed within it.<sup>19</sup>

3. Creation is also used secondarily within Wisdom Literature as a defense for Divine Justice.<sup>20</sup> The problem of theodicy, or why God permits evil to exist within the world, has existed since man's beginnings and all cultures struggle to deal with it in some form. The Book of Job demonstrates how this was dealt with in ancient Israelite thought. In Job 38-41, God speaks to Job and his friends from a whirlwind after a previous lengthy discussion by them as to why Job fell into all sorts of evils. In those chapters Yahweh never gives the reason why those evils exist. He simply points Job back to creation in order to show that it is Yahweh alone, not humanity, not other forces or "gods," who is in control of everything and sustains it by His omnipotent right hand and word (cf., Job 40:8-14). Thus Creation comes to the defense for how and why God governs all the way He does.

4. As such Creation is enlisted for Divine Service to the will of God and shows the providence of God.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Forher, "Sophia," *TDNT*, 489.

<sup>18</sup> Crenshaw, "Prolegomenon," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, from the Library of Biblical Studies, edited by Prof. Harry M. Orlinsky, KTAV, New York, 1976, 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-31, 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-35.

In summing up the purpose of these themes within Wisdom Literature as it pertains to Yahweh's possession and use of *chakam/chokmah*, Dr. Horace Hummel sheds much light in his book *The Word Becoming Flesh*. Hummel writes,

“Wisdom” deals with life where it is actually lived by all people, with the “trivia” of existence, where if the believer is not faithful, he certainly will be nowhere, with intangibles to which neither legal prescription nor prophetic broadsides easily speak. . . .

. . . It may be helpful to compare such wisdom to “general revelation” or to the “order of creation.” . . . Although written in all men's hearts, [wisdom] not only conceals but condemns until special revelation [i.e., Scripture] makes all things new. . . . After conversion, the Christian continues to grow and learn in many respects and from any source, but confessing that the real Source of “secular” knowledge is the same as that vouchsafed in Scripture. God's self conscious creature (and *a fortiori* the redeemed one) is no passive robot, but one who actively seeks his place in the world of his Creator (*fides quaerens intellectum*). As one made in God's image, this search is part of his quest for GOD'S WILL IN HIS LIFE, AND BELIEVING THAT ALL TRUTH IS ULTIMATELY ONE BECAUSE ITS ULTIMATE AUTHOR IS ONE, he utilizes all relevant sources, whatever their earthly mediation. [Capitalization Added] All knowledge is not revealed in Scripture, but all knowledge becomes “wisdom” *coram Deo* only when ultimately subordinated to, tested, and evaluated in the light of Scripture. In a sense, then, wisdom provides a sampling or exemplars of how the believer confronts the valid aspects of this world's wisdom and employs it *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.<sup>22</sup>

*Chakam/Chokmah* as it pertains to Yahweh is thus meant to show that it is not only the way by which God creates and governs all things, but also to point thereby to a relationship that is set up and maintained between Yahweh and man, and between man and man. These two themes can be demonstrated in Genesis 1:26-28 even though the word *chakam/chokmah* does not occur here. This passage points out that man was fashioned personally by Yahweh in His image and placed in the Garden of Eden in order to be God's steward of creation. This act sets up the relationship between the Creator and the creature. It also sets up a relationship between people. In order for these relationships to be maintained properly so that a state of happiness and blessedness exists on all levels, *chakam/chokmah* in terms of ethical conduct, knowledge of God, and religious piety is needed and placed into man's heart by God, who is the source of all

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<sup>22</sup> Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1979, 397f.

wisdom. This wisdom is to be maintained by an inward respect or fear for Yahweh, as well as outward acts of devotion and meditation in respect to Yahweh's ways. Where this wisdom is lost due to some outside force or influence such as Satan and sin (cf., Gen. 3), then the relationship between Yahweh and man is cut off, the relationship between people becomes tattered and frayed, the image of God is lost in man, and all of creation is thrown into chaos. For:

Sin is disorder, deliberately chosen disorder; it is reason's deliberate self-seduction. Sin raises the creature above God, inverting the pyramid of God's wise ordering, and it is done with the hope that somewhere, somehow, there will be no God to see, rebuke, and punish it. Sin deliberately insults the divine wisdom, for a sinner *knows*. His knowledge is wayward, it tries to defend itself against the light; it seeks false motives to strengthen it before the sin and false excuses afterwards. All this is in stark contrast to the prudence that befits man as much as wisdom is an attribute of God.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore the primary relationship between Yahweh and man, between man and man, along with the image of God, must be restored, and only God can do that. This restoration is the eschatological blessing promised by Yahweh Himself, first in Eden, but also throughout all of Scripture.

Thus, Scripture reveals Yahweh's wisdom not only in creating humanity, but also in how sinful humanity will be restored to its rightful position within creation. *Chokmah* from a human perspective, in its relationship with Yahweh, consists of learning about Yahweh and His ways and then living accordingly in the "fear of the Lord" as recorded by Scripture. Where a person lives accordingly, then, *chokmah* has achieved its purposes of enabling a person to live a meaningful and blessed life, not only in relationship to Yahweh, but also with others.

The Septuagint (LXX) translates *chakam/chokmah* consistently with *sophos/sophia*, respectively.<sup>24</sup> Understanding how the Septuagint uses this word is important for a number of reasons: (1) The New Testament also uses this word consistently when it talks about "wisdom."

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<sup>23</sup> W.J. McGarry, *He Cometh*, Spiritual Book Associates, New York, 1941, 322.

(2) A comparison between the Greek and Hebrew of “wisdom” shows that while the respective words are the same gender-wise, there is a difference in understanding, both in terms of grammatical use and meaning. (3) This is the word that the Feminist movement uses when it talks about “Lady Sophia” in various forms. We look first at the usage; *sophos/sophia* are used in the following manners:

*Sophia* is used 127 times for *chokmah* (also once for *chkm* in Prv. 17:28) and only 11 times for other words, twice for *biynah*,<sup>25</sup> 3 times for *tevunah*, twice for *da'ath*, once each for *musar*, *machasheveth*, *sekel*, *mechuqqaq*. *Chokmah* is usually translated *sophia*, but 8 times *phronesis*,<sup>26</sup> (only 3 *Bas.*), 3 *suvesis* and 4 *episteme* (only Ez. 28). *Sophos* is used 141 for *chakam* or *chakom*, and *chokmah* (3 times *sophos*), but only twice for *biyn* and once each for *chortom* (Da.) and *nakoach*. *Chakam* is mostly translated *sophos*, other words being used only 10 times, namely, *phronimos* 4 times, *sophistes*, *technites*, *panourgos*, *althes* once each, *philo*i twice (Est.). The verb *chakom* is rendered 24 times by *sophizein/sophizesthai*, *sophos einai* or *sophos gignesthai*, and only once by *katasophizesthai* and twice by *phronein*. . . . In the Wisdom books *chkm* and derivatives are uniformly translated by *sophos*, etc. Only in the historical book[s] and the prophets do we occasionally find *phronesis*, *phronimos*, *sunetos* or *aisthesis*.<sup>27</sup>

Like its Hebrew counterpart, *sophos/sophia* is equally distributed in the LXX without too much regard for gender except for when the context demands it.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, *chkmh* and *sophia*

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<sup>24</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 496.

<sup>25</sup> *biynah/tevunah*=understanding, *da'ath*=knowledge, *musar*=discipline/instruction, *machasheveth*=idea, *sekel*=insight, *mechuqqaq*= what has been prescribed, *chortom*=soothsayer-priest, *nakoach*=lying straight ahead/right; Definitions taken from *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, William L. Holladay, editor, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988, s.v., “*biynah*,” “*tevunah*,” “*da'ath*,” “*musar*,” “*machasheveth*,” “*sekel*,” “*mechuqqaq*,” “*chortom*,” “*nakoach*.”

<sup>26</sup> *phronesis/phronimos/phronein*=to have understanding/wisdom, to think, *suvesis/suветos*=intelligence, *episteme*=skill/scientific knowlege, *sophistes*=master craftsman/cheat, *technites*=artisan, *panourgos*=knave/villian, *althes*=really/truly, *philo*i=friends; Definitions taken from *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford University, Oxford, ENG, Impression, 1985, s.v. “*phronesis*,” “*phronimos*,” “*phronein*,” “*suvesis*,” “*suветos*,” “*episteme*,” “*sophistes*,” “*technites*,” “*panourgos*,” “*althes*,” “*philos*.”

<sup>27</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 496.

<sup>28</sup> Many languages that have grammatical gender have words in them that do not always equate with maleness or femaleness. A good example is the German word for a young or unmarried girl: *das Madchen*. In German this is a grammatically neuter word, even though the subject in question is obviously a female. Many of the Romance languages work in the same fashion. Often there is no rhyme or reason why something is male or female --or better expressed masculine or feminine-- in a language that uses extensively grammatical gender. This is something that is often difficult for Modern American English speakers to understand at first, because here grammatical gender is virtually non-existent or has definite associations with what is male and female. Thus part of the debate on the “Gender of God” and Scriptures may reflect more an English language problem than anything that Greek and Hebrew pose when using masculine or feminine words and imagery. For a fuller treatment on such issues, see

come closest in meaning when denoting technical ability.<sup>29</sup> Aside from these similarities, however, there are some important differences that should be noted.

*Chakam/Chokmah* in Hebrew is generally thought of as an act, conduct, or practical being (i.e. verbally). In Greek *sophos/sophia* is more of a quality (i.e. an adjective) rather than an action. The reason for this is that, “. . .Grk. has no verb of the stem σοφ– apart from σοφιζεσθαι (→527, ff), which is clearly dependent on σοφος/σοφια.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, by the time of the LXX *sophia* has become an accepted philosophical term that leads to *phronesis* as a chief cardinal virtue.<sup>31</sup> Such a view of *chokmah* is foreign to the Hebrew understanding of the term, where wisdom results usually from a “fear of Yahweh” and is seen as one lives by faith in Yahweh. The translators of the LXX faced these difficulties, although somewhat unsuccessfully.<sup>32</sup>

For example, in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) Proverbs 10:14 reads as *chokamiym yitspenu-da'ath*, that is, “the wise will store up knowledge.” The LXX has used *aisthesis* for *da'ath*. However, since for the Greeks, perceptions cannot form the basis for wisdom, the LXX translates *yitspen in sensu malo* of “hiding knowledge” (Grk.: *krupsousin*).<sup>33</sup> Another difficulty is seen in Proverbs 21:30 in which the MT reads *'eyn chakmah we'eyn tevunah we'eyn 'etsah leneged yahweh*, “there is no wisdom, and no understanding or counsel before Yahweh.” This could have the meaning that no earthly wisdom compares to that of God’s wisdom. However, since this proverb made little sense to the translator, a substitution is made from *leneged yahweh*

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Wayne Grudem, “What’s Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations,” published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, PO Box 7337, Libertyville, IL, 1997, website: [www.cbmw.org/html/whatswrongwith.html](http://www.cbmw.org/html/whatswrongwith.html)

<sup>29</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 497.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6, chapter 12. Also, Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 497.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

to *pros ton asebe* or “with the ungodly.” Thus the ungodly man has no true wisdom from God, while the righteous do. While not necessarily unscriptural, the LXX translation seems to fall short of the intended MT sense of the text. A final example of difficulties comes from Proverbs 13:10.

The MT reads, “By pride the vain man causeth contention; but with the well advised is wisdom.” “The LXX renders *no 'atsiym* by *eauton epignomones* and thus the Grk. version acquires a sense close to the famous *Gnothi seauton* of the sage Thales in Plat. Prot., 343b. . .<sup>34</sup>

This example stands in direct contrast to the message of the Old Testament of “Know the Lord” (cf., 1 Kings 8:60, Ps. 46:10, Ps. 100:3, Ezek. 6:7, Hos. 2:20). The LXX helps us to understand that what may be easily understood and recognizable in one language is not always so in another. The LXX shows that one’s *Weltanschauung*, or world-view, as it is taught or learned will often shape a person’s understanding of a word or a message. Thus, not only are proper word choices and syntax of utmost priority in translating, but hermeneutical and isagogical presuppositions must also be taken into account. Where these presuppositions are ignored or not consciously brought to the forefront, then -- perhaps, unintentionally-- a word or message is most liable to be misunderstood or taken out of context.<sup>35</sup>

In view of the hymn verse under examination, one can then ask, what is the driving force behind it? What does it presuppose and intend to say? McGarry points out that the language of this antiphon, “. . . bears the weight of God’s eternity and mercy. They are a poignant cry of the soul of the people of Advent; they address God by the most compelling and tender of divine

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<sup>34</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 497.

<sup>35</sup> Such misunderstandings or distortions of a text are possible even when one’s presuppositions are taken into account. See, for instance the Jehovah Witnesses’ New World Translation of the Bible (NWT). Yet such distortions here are often deliberate attempts to alter the meaning of a text that would speak otherwise even when their claim is faithfulness to a text.

names, and they always end with an intense COME, VENI.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, one is drawing here upon the name of Christ as the Wisdom and Word of God as proclaimed by Scripture. The verse is an appeal to Christ as the Wisdom of God to reverse the chaotic effects of sin and to restore the way of true knowledge and glory. The refrain then answers that prayer by linking the name Wisdom of God with Emmanuel --a name of Jesus applied by Matthew in his Gospel (Matt. 1:23)-- thereby showing that Christ as ‘God with us’ has come. By His life, death and resurrection He has heard and answered the prayers of His people. Without connecting the two names here, the possibility exists for seeing this verse as an appeal to a *Sophia* goddess and not to Christ Jesus as Wisdom Incarnate.

The New Testament goes on to pick up several aspects of both the MT and the LXX. In Luke 2:40, the boy Jesus is described as growing in stature and *pleroumenon sophia*. “*Sophia* here epitomises a pious manner of life which shapes the character and which finds expression in early and astonishing knowledge of the Law.”<sup>37</sup> However, James also sees *sophia* in terms of piety and upright conduct, 3:13, 17.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, James also connects *sophia* with prayer and faith in 1:5f.<sup>39</sup>

If anyone of you lacks *sophias*, let him request [it] in the presence of God, who gives generously and without reproach, and [it] will be given to him. Let him request [it] in faith not doubting; for the one who doubts is like the waves of the sea which are moved and tossed by the wind. (translation mine)

Thus, to ask for *sophia* in prayer has a Scriptural basis. Here James combines *sophia* in terms of piety and prayer. It could be argued on the basis of the fact that since James is one of the disputed books of the NT, an *antilegoumenon*, one cannot ask for wisdom from God.

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<sup>36</sup> McGarry, *He Cometh*, 319.

<sup>37</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 514.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

However, the OT book of Proverbs, which is regarded universally as canonical, has parallels of turning to wisdom, seeking it out and acquiring it for the sake of life and faith (cf., Prov. 2:2, 4:5, 5:1, 8:32-9:4). Likewise in the NT, “Colossians 1:9 and Ephesians 1:8 describe steady growth in the Christian knowledge of faith as *sophia*, *sunesis*, *pneumatike*, and *phronesis*.”<sup>40</sup> 2 Peter 3:15 also underscores the idea of *sophia* in terms of Christian knowledge of the faith as the apostle writes and proclaims it.<sup>41</sup> Along with James, these Scripture passages demonstrate that the hymn verse in question is indeed appropriate in terms of praying for wisdom in terms of faith and sanctification. The pronoun “her,” in our verse, would then be more of a grammatical gender and poetic license pointing back most likely to the original *viam* or “path of knowlege.”<sup>42</sup> When viewed from Scripture, the real question then does not seem to be what does it mean to say “Teach us in her ways to go” --which the NT, in particular, views as being the contents of the Christian faith and life-- but, “Who is this Wisdom from on high?”

PHEME PERKINS, from Boston College, demonstrates that elsewhere in the NT there is a close relationship between *Sophia* and Christ. For example, in Matthew 11:25-27 (parallel: Luke 10:21f), Jesus describes Wisdom as hidden from the wise, while Jesus has given her to His disciples. “Only those who ‘listen to Wisdom’ know the true identity of Jesus, her spokesperson.”<sup>43</sup> In Luke 11:49, Jesus condemns Israel for killing Wisdom’s messengers and prophets. Jesus’ condemnation in Luke turns out to be an oracle of doom in Matthew 23:34,

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<sup>40</sup> Bertram, “Sophia,” *TDNT*, 523.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 525.

<sup>42</sup> In examining the original Latin text, there is no form of “her” mentioned at all (*eius*, *suus*, *-a*, *-um*.) The problem seems to lie with the English translation, which in this case while not heretical seems to be very free for the sake of filling the meter. *Viam* in Latin is a feminine, singular, accusative noun and this is most likely what the translator was referring to in saying, “teach us in her ways to go.” It can be just as equally argued that the “her” here is referring to *Sapientia* or *prudentiae*. However, the distance of *Sapientia* with its position at the very beginning seems to rule it out as the likely antecedent. *Prudentiae* is a more likely alternative. However, its position after *viam* would seem to place more of the emphasis on *viam*, where *viam* serves as a direct object and *prudentiae* then tells us what kind of path is being shown or traveled upon.

<sup>43</sup> PHEME PERKINS, “Jesus: God’s Wisdom,” from *Word and World*, vol. 7, no. 3, Summer 1987, 275.



where Jesus identifies Himself as having sent the messengers and prophets.<sup>44</sup> Thus in the Gospels a connection is implied that Jesus is the Wisdom of God when He speaks in these terms. This is further clarified by Paul when he writes about God's wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, which we will examine in the next section.

In conclusion here, when Scriptures talk about *chakam/chokmah* or *sophos/sophia* they are not overly concerned that wisdom is expressed often in feminine vocables, which is simply the way both the Hebrew and Greek languages work. Instead, more emphasis is placed on understanding wisdom as the gift of God that is necessary for knowing, understanding, and living in the fear of the Lord. It comes by faith and prayer to the Lord and is maintained by living in fear of the Lord. In the OT, *chokmah/sophia* ultimately point to the Messiah, who is the embodiment of it. Understandably, the NT then sees *sophia* as having been revealed and seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We now turn our attention to how Scripture specifically applies the title of *chokmah/sophia* to Jesus Christ.

#### Analytical Study of Proverbs 8:22-31

One of the reasons for studying Wisdom Christology is that Jesus Himself challenges every generation to answer the question, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:13-18, Mark 8:27-9:1, Luke 9:18-27). Peter's answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," (Matt. 16:15) has served as the basis for all other orthodox Christian creeds, confessions, and Christological enunciations from the statements about Jesus in the New Testament to the ecumenical creeds. Recent scholarship in investigating the Incarnation has turned up some valuable insights into this area from the perspective of Wisdom Literature.

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<sup>44</sup> PHEME PERKINS, "Jesus: God's Wisdom," *Word and World*, 275.

Some of these insights come from the area of canonical Wisdom Literature, plus deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books of the Old Testament like Ecclesiasticus, Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. For instance, the idea of Wisdom becoming incarnate to make her dwelling among men can be seen in the apocryphal book of Sirach 24:8-11. Wisdom states the following,

Then the Creator of all gave me his command, and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent, saying, 'In Jacob make your dwelling, in Israel your inheritance.' Before all ages, in the beginning, he created me, and through all ages, I shall not cease to be. In the holy Tent I ministered before him, and in Sion I fixed my abode. Thus in the chosen city he has given me rest, in Jerusalem is my domain. (St. Joseph Confraternity Version)

This passage and others like it have been connected not only with Proverbs 8:22-35, but also with John's Gospel prologue, especially verse 14, where the Word became flesh and dwelt among men and in 1Corinthians 1:18-31, where Jesus is called, "the Wisdom of God." Perkins has noted, "The Fourth Gospel gives narrative embodiment to a Christology in which God's creative Wisdom/Word has become incarnate. God's revelation is exclusively identified with the person of Jesus."<sup>45</sup> The purpose of this section is to see how Perkin's theme plays out in a very crucial passage for understanding Jesus as 'The Wisdom of God': Proverbs 8:22-31.

#### Proverbs 8:22-31

##### *Translation:*

22. Yahweh begot me<sup>46</sup> as the beginning<sup>47</sup> of His way, the first of His deeds of old.  
23. From eternity, I was formed<sup>48</sup> from the start before the beginning of the earth.  
24. When there were no deep fountains, when there were no springs abounding with water,  
I was given birth.<sup>49</sup>  
25. When the mountains were not yet shaped, [and] before the hills,  
I was given birth;

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<sup>45</sup> Perkins, "Jesus God's Wisdom," *Word and World*, 278.

<sup>46</sup> Heb.: *qananiy*

<sup>47</sup> Heb.: *re'shiyth*

<sup>48</sup> Heb.: *nissaktiy*. Possible alternate translation: I was ordained. See Toy, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, from *The International Critical Commentary*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1904, 173.

<sup>49</sup> Heb.: *cholaltiy*

26. [even] before He made the earth, or the open spaces, or the first dust of the world.  
 27. When He created the heavens, when He drew its circle on the face of the deep,  
       I was there.  
 28. When He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep,  
 29. When He assigned the sea its limit so that the waters would not trespass His command  
       when He marked out the foundation of the earth,  
 30. Then I was before Him like a beloved child,<sup>50</sup> and I was [His] delight daily,  
       rejoicing before Him always.  
 31. Rejoicing in His inhabitable world and my delight was in the sons of men.

Often there are three general views associated with this passage. The first and perhaps most common view today is to look at Proverbs 8:22-31 as simply describing an attribute of God in personified form.<sup>51</sup> The second, which is more radical and liberal, is to say that after looking at the Isis and Ma'at cults of ancient Egypt the ancient Israelites started not only to picture God in feminine terms, but also possibly viewed her as a goddess.<sup>52</sup> The third and more traditional Christian view is to see *Sophia* as being a hypostacization<sup>53</sup> of God's wisdom and a type for the pre-Incarnate Christ, a Messianic prophecy where *Lady Chokmah* becomes the speaker for Christ.<sup>54</sup> The fact that these three views exist shows that careful study is needed for this passage.

In order to explore these views one must first understand the thought progression and the context of this passage in relationship to the rest of Proverbs.

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<sup>50</sup> Heb.: 'amon

<sup>51</sup> Robert Alden, *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice*, foreword by Haddon W. Robinson, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983, 69; Roland Murphy, *Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Abindon Press, Nashville, TN, 1983, 67; but also (!) *The Concordia Pulpit*, 1986, Series C, Old Testament Readings, "Confessing The Mystery of God," by Robert Selle, 147. In fairness to Rev. Selle, he does conclude that "Wisdom" is none other than Jesus Christ, but he does not appear to stay very long with the text at hand, preferring to jump right away into the NT explanations, which are clearer for him. Thus he seems to miss out on the wealth that this passage offers on Christology.

<sup>52</sup> Bernard Lee, *Jesus and the Metaphors of God: The Christs of the New Testament*, from "Conversation on the Road Not Taken: Studies in Judaism and Christianity," vol. 2, Stimulus Book, Paulist Press, New York, NY 1993, 129.

<sup>53</sup> A hypostasis is a term denoting a person, where something exists of itself. This term is generally limited to describing the divine reality of the Trinity, where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from one another even though they all share the same and equal substance and attributes. Cf., Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures In Christ*, translated by J.A.O. Preus, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1971, 31 on *enhypostasis*.

<sup>54</sup> Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, 457.

The thought progress for this passage can be outlined as follows: (1) Wisdom has always existed in a close relationship with God, even before the present created order came into being. (2) Wisdom plays a part in creation, like a master craftsman and a child at play. (3) Wisdom's utmost delight is not only in what Yahweh has done, but also in mankind.<sup>55</sup> (4) Verses 35-36, which lie just outside the text in discussion, show that Wisdom's purpose in creation is to bestow life. Whoever sins against her hates his soul and thereby prefers death to life.

In terms of context, in relationship to the rest of Proverbs, *Lady Chokmah/Sophia* already makes an appearance in 1:20-33. There, Wisdom cries out to the simple, or morally deficient, to come to her for reproof and counsel so that her spirit and a godly, peaceful life can exist within those who seek her. The theme of life is one that plays so often throughout the first nine chapters. Wisdom's primary and perhaps only role is to continually cry out to those who will listen about the preservation of the righteous and blessed life, including the turning of sinners from death to life. This parallels John 1:12f, and 1Corinthians 1:23-24,30 in which both John and Paul describe the work of Jesus Christ as the Word and Wisdom of God:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God --children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God ... For out of the fullness of His grace, we all receive blessing upon blessing; for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:12-13, 16-17). ...

... But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ... It is because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God -- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption (1Cor. 1:23-24, 30).

Here, Jesus, as the Word and Wisdom of God, comes into the world with the call of the Gospel, the message of grace and truth which Paul says is proclaimed in preaching Christ crucified. God's wisdom in Christ Crucified bestows on those who receive Jesus, that is to

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<sup>55</sup> Crawford Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, 172.

embrace Him by faith, the right to become children of God.<sup>56</sup> In embracing by faith Jesus Christ as God's Wisdom, a three-fold blessing is then bestowed upon the believer: righteousness, holiness and redemption. Without Christ, we have nothing; but in Him we have all things that lead to eternal life.<sup>57</sup> Thus, in the words of Conzelmann, "[Jesus as God's Wisdom] points to the origin and direction of the event of salvation: from God, "in Christ," to us."<sup>58</sup>

Proverbs 2:6 then shows that wisdom comes from the Lord, and from that proceeds knowledge and understanding, thus foreshadowing Proverbs 8:22 where *Lady Sophia* comes from the Lord.

Chapter two is also important because in verses 16 through 19 we are introduced to the strange adulterous woman, often called *Dame Folly*. *Dame Folly* makes other appearances in Proverbs 7:5-27 and again in Proverbs 9:13-18, where she is pictured as a seductress to unsuspecting men. Proverbs 9:18 shows the deadly consequences of following *Dame Folly* where in her banquet the dead reside and her guests reside in the dreaded realm of the dead, Sheol. After chapter 9 neither *Sophia* nor *Folly* make another appearance. This could appear to be disappointing to those reading the rest of the book of Proverbs. However, by the end of chapter 9 both *Sophia* and *Folly* have made their case. They are seen in the starkest possible contrast between life and death, and the victory throughout the book belongs to those who would choose life. This having been seen, the stage is then set for *Sophia's* spokesmen in Proverbs who reveal her secrets to life: Solomon in chapter 10, Agur the son of Jakeh in chapter 30, and Lemuel in chapter 31.

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<sup>56</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1961, 59.

<sup>57</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Second Edition, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1971, 60-61.

<sup>58</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, edited by George MacRae, translated by James Leitch, bibliography and references by James Dunkly, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1975, 52.

After the relatively easy task of figuring out thought progression and general context, interpreting the text in view of word translation, dating, cultural milieu, and characterization of *Sophia* becomes more difficult. The main reason for this is that Proverbs 8:22-31 is classified as Hebrew poetry of a synonymous parallel type of ten couplets.<sup>59</sup> As with any poetry, there is a compression of language, where in the combining of words, phrases, characters, actions, and sources the poem takes on a life of its own. However, in Hebrew poetry with its various forms of parallelism, the compression and combination of words and ideas can sometimes become so intense that no one translation can fully express all that is being said. Such appears to be the case with our text.

The first problem that stands out with this passage is in the area of word translation. There are three key words or phrases that stand out here and affect how we view the person of *Sophia* as she stands in relationship to Yahweh. They are in respective order of appearance in the text: *qananiy* and *cholaltiy* as a word pair, and *'amon*.

Holladay notes in his lexicon that *qananiy* can take on as many as seven meanings. In the *Qal* form of the verb, *qnn* can mean “acquire,” “buy in terms of land or people,” “ransom,” “redeem,” “create,” and “produce/give birth.” In the *Niphal* form, *qnn* means “to be bought.” Occasionally, the verb can also be found in the *Hiphil* form, although this appears to occur rarely.<sup>60</sup> In this text, *qananiy* is a *Qal* perfect, 3rd person, masculine, singular verb with a 1st person, singular suffix.

Thus, we can limit ourselves to only the *Qal* meanings, although this does not make the task of translating this word any easier with our text. Given the context, one can eliminate the meanings “ransom,” “redeem,” and “buy in terms of land/people.” There is no indication that

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<sup>59</sup> Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, 172-176.

<sup>60</sup> *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, William L. Holladay, editor, Tenth Corrected Impression, 1988, s.v. “*qnn*.”

*Sophia* did or needed to have done these things here. Likewise, the term “acquire” could be ruled out given the general Biblical presupposition that God is all-wise already and needs nothing beside Himself to carry out His will. However, Alden in his commentary on Proverbs seems to favor this view of God acquiring wisdom. To quote Alden, “God needed [Wisdom] to help him in the creation of the world, so he created her first.”<sup>61</sup>

Most commentators like Toy, Cohen, Murphy, and Alden favor the definition of “created/formed.” Toy notes that this is supported by parallel expressions in verses 23 through 25, *nissakti* and *cholaltiy* respectively. However, this translation has been the most controversial within the history of the Christian Church. The LXX translated this phrase as *ektise me*.<sup>62</sup> It was this translation that caused the most heated debate in the Christological controversies between the Arians and the Orthodox parties of the fourth century A.D. Keil-Delitzsch notes:

The Arians used the *ektise me* as a proof of their doctrine of the *filius non genitus, sed factus, i.e.* of His existence before the world, but not originating in time; while, on the contrary, the Orthodox preferred the translation of *ektesato*<sup>63</sup>, and understood it of the co-eternal existence of the Son with the Father, and agreed with the *ektise* of the LXX by referring it not to the actual existence, but to the position, place of the Son.<sup>64</sup>

Keil-Delitzsch rightly points out both sides would be wrong to make their claims simply on the basis of the word *ektise* alone. Wisdom here does not claim to be God, but stands in a relationship to God. Yet, Wisdom’s existence is eternal, before the creation of the world, when time first came into existence.<sup>65</sup> Is there another translation of *qananiy* that would refute the

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Alden, *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice*, 73.

<sup>62</sup> Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. VI, “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon,” translated from the German by James Martin, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976, 183.

<sup>63</sup> Derived from the word *ктаομαι*, which means to “acquire or possess for oneself.” *An Intermediate Greek -English Lexicon*, Liddell and Scott Edition, Impression of 1985, s.v. “*κταομαι*.”

<sup>64</sup> Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. VI, “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon,” 183.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

Arian position and give credence to the Orthodox position on the basis of Scripture while not doing violence to the text?

The answer seems to lie in Genesis 4:1. Here Eve gives birth to a son and says, “*qaniyti ish eth-Yaweh.*” Holladay in his lexicon notes that *qaniyti* should be translated as “produce” or given the context, “to beget or give birth to.”<sup>66</sup> To use this definition in Proverbs 8 would not be wrong at all given the general thought progression found in it and the close relationship that exists between Wisdom and Yahweh.<sup>67</sup> Translating *qaniyti* as “give birth to” would then serve as a synonym for *cholaltiy*, which is generally translated as “brought forth or given birth.” By allowing these two words to play off of one another, one could then make a case that while Wisdom is not God here, she is a reflection of His being and action and thus stands in a unique relationship with Yahweh because she comes first and foremost from Him. This has its parallel in Hebrews 1:3 where Christ is seen to be the radiance and exact representation of God’s being and glory and John 1:18 where no one has ever seen God except the only-begotten of God who is at the bosom of the Father making Him known to us.

The other word in question is *‘amon*. Scholars propose basically two possible meanings: “beloved child” or “master craftsman.” For instance, in Lamentations 4:5, *ha’emuniym*, the word means those who are nurtured or fostered --a child of one’s delight.<sup>68</sup> However, in Numbers 11:12 (Moses and Israel) and Esther 2:7 (Mordecai and Esther) where the word *‘omen* is used to

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<sup>66</sup> *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, William L. Holladay, editor, Tenth Corrected Impression, 1988, s.v. “*qnn.*”.

<sup>67</sup> Indeed the Roman Catholic St. Joseph’s Confraternity translation of this passage uses “Beget.” The 1984 update of Luther’s Bible merely reads, “*Der HERR hat mich schon gehabt im Anfang seiner Wege,*” or “The Lord had me already in the beginning of his ways.” It is a translation that could suggest “begetting,” although there are better ways of saying this in German (e.g. *zeugen, hervorbringen*). I prefer the translation of beget because it brings out the Christological implications more clearly and the words *cholaltiy* and *‘amon* seem to support this translation.

<sup>68</sup> *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2nd Edition, *Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart*, 1984, 1364; also, Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. VI, “Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon,” 190.



describe the nurturer, it becomes quite clear that the child is not one's own.<sup>69</sup> At best it is an adopted child. If it were not for context, the translation of 'amon as "beloved child" would be quite problematic for Christology given the word's connotation. It could lead possibly to an adoptionistic Christology in the end.<sup>70</sup> However, our passage here steers clear of implying adoptionism by the fact that *Sophia* is the first of Yahweh's ways. In other words, she has always been from eternity; besides Yahweh, she is the only one around when the world is created -- nothing else besides them exist, not even time-- thus making the idea of an adoption absurd.

Elsewhere, in Jeremiah 52:15 and Song of Solomon 7:2, 'amon is used to describe a master craftsman.<sup>71</sup> There is no particular skill associated with this meaning. In the Song of Solomon 7:2, an 'amon would be a jeweler. In Jeremiah 52, it simply refers to a group of people with various kinds of skills used in construction as well as arts and crafts. By noting these characteristics of an 'amon there is no basis for a claim that *Sophia* is a Mother Earth goddess or God as Mother giving birth to the world.

Translating 'amon as a "master craftsman" could serve as an equally valid translation in Proverbs 8 to "beloved child." Wisdom alongside Yahweh is busy helping and rejoicing in the creation of the world with the exquisite skill of a master craftsman. It would seem that given the context, translating 'amon as "master craftsman" would be the preferred translation. However, as Alden asks, "Did wisdom aid God as a 'craftsman' or 'little child'? Considerable ink has been spilled on this question because the root word is so well known. . . .I prefer to read the word as

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<sup>69</sup> *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1369; also, Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. VI, "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon," 190.

<sup>70</sup> The following groups or people held to an adoptionistic Christology in the Early Church: the Ebionites, Theodotus of Byzantium (in Rome 190 A.D.), Paul of Samosata, Photinus of Sirmium (d.376). In the Middle Ages, Elipandus of Toledo held a combination of an adoptionistic-Nestorian view of Christ. In modern times, adoptionistic Christology has appeared in Socinianism, Unitarianism, neology and certain branches of liberal theology. Bengt Hagglund, *History of Theology*, translated by Gene Lund, Third Edition, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1968, 32f, 70f, 152.

<sup>71</sup> Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. VI, "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon," 190.

an adverb, 'I was *faithfully* by his side.'"<sup>72</sup> By translating *'amon* as an adverb Alden has seemingly dropped the imagery that the word is intended to evoke be it a "master craftsman" or "beloved child." Thus his translation, which seems to be based on personal preferences, leaves something to be desired. However, he is correct in pointing out that much ink has been spilled over this issue. The commentaries we have examined so far are about equally split in picking either "master craftsman" or "beloved child." Translations of the Bible like the NET, NKJV, NIV, NWT, RSV pick "master craftsman," while KJV, the 1984 edition of Luther's Bible,<sup>73</sup> and the St. Joseph Catholic Bible choose, "beloved child." Thus a decision in the translation has to be made, even though here both word choices are equally valid. This writer has chosen "beloved child" in order to maintain the close knit relationship established by Wisdom in verse 22 thereby bringing forth more clearly the Christological implications of God the Father and God the Son within the text. Perhaps the best solution is to pick one word or the other and then in a footnote explain the alternate translation. In the explanation it would then be wise to demonstrate how both translations here can work off one another without altering the sense of the text. One such suggestion could be that the creation of the world was done with the skill of a master craftsman and yet it was mere child's play for God to do so.

After problems with translating Proverbs 8, there is the problem of dating and cultural milieu. The two factors go hand in hand because "Wisdom Literature" was a common genre for the Ancient Near East. By determining the date and establishing the cultural milieu, it is then possible to come to some likely conclusions about the original purpose of the text.

How one dates our text in question will often depend upon one's theological presupposition. From a higher-critical perspective Roland Murphy states, "The assumption of

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<sup>72</sup> Robert Alden, *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice*, 74.

Solomonic authorship (which Christians shared with the Jews) is not historically correct, according to today's scholarly judgment."<sup>74</sup> Jesuit Bernard Lee follows much the same track when he states,

During the two centuries before the birth of Jesus, *Sophia* rivals and in some places replaces *Ruach* and *Dabhar* as the major metaphor of God's creating, ordering and saving presence in the world. Because of *Sophia's* functions in the world and her unique relation with God, it is no surprise that followers of Jesus quickly turn to her to understand Jesus . . . However, the wisdom literature that does not involve a personification of *Sophia* is larger than that which does. The *Sophia* figure functions principally in three places. She has a large presence in the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs. Those nine chapters are the youngest part of the book; they serve to introduce the various collections of older sayings which follow. *Sophia* also speaks marvelously in the twenty-fourth chapter of Sirach. And some of her most vivid portrayals are to be found in the Wisdom of Solomon, composed a bare fifty years before the birth of Jesus.<sup>75</sup>

There seem to be two reasons why this is so. The first, according to Lee, is that to introduce a "woman" into a religious culture's language is no small thing when previously male images were used.<sup>76</sup> This presupposes a lot of time spent on reflection and a radical reworking of Israel's theology, all of which is done after the prophetic tradition has died down in c. 445 B.C. Second, according to Lee, is cultural borrowing and adaptation for Israel's purposes:

It was probably the Egyptian cult of the goddess Isis more than anything else that finally prompted the Hebrew tradition to develop the feminine *Sophia* figure. Temple inscriptions and coins with her likeness show that worship of Isis was widespread in the Hellenized Mediterranean world in the final centuries B.C.E. Isis creates the world, and orders human civilization, with special attention to human love. This cult was attractive to Jews as it was to so much of the Mediterranean world. There is a widespread agreement among scholars that *Sophia* came to prominence as a response to the immense attraction of a mother goddess tradition.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> The editors point out, though, that Luther working from the Greek and Latin texts translated 'amon as "der Werkmeister," i.e., "master craftsman." *Die Bibel: nach der Übersetzung Martin Luthers mit Apocryphen*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, DDR, 1984, 630.

<sup>74</sup> Roland Murphy, *Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1983, 53.

<sup>75</sup> Bernard Lee, *Conversation on the Road Not Taken*, vol. 2, "Jesus and the Metaphors of God: The Christs of the New Testament," edited by Helga Croner, Paulist Press, New York, 1993, 129.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

While Lee's basic reasoning on time for reflection and writing perhaps as a response to the immense attraction of a mother goddess tradition are essentially correct, the assumption cannot be made for a late date or even that cultural borrowing occurred in the case of our text. It has been noted that the personification of Wisdom has its parallels from texts like the Egyptian *Book of Apophis* and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, both of which date around the middle to the end of the second millennium B.C. (c. 1500-1200 B.C.).<sup>78</sup> Such a date would allow for plenty of circulation time so that Solomon and his court in c. 950 B.C. would have been familiar with it, and most certainly Hezekiah and his court in c. 700 B.C. -- if one allows that the final editing of the book was done around that time. On this basis there is no reason to assume a late date for our text as Lee does. Instead, it is valid and perhaps even preferable to date the text from the time of Solomon's reign when the united monarchy of ancient Israel was at its height and there would be time for theological reflection as opposed to the simple national survival of later centuries.

The second assumption is whether or not there is cultural borrowing occurring in Proverbs 8. To examine this assumption, we look at the texts from *Book of Apophis* and *Enuma Elish* respectively since this has often been considered to be the basis for Proverbs 8.

The All-Lord said, after he had come into being: I am he who came into being as Khepri. When I had come into being, being (itself) came into being, and all beings came into being after I came into being. Many were the beings which came forth from my mouth, before heaven came into being, before earth came into being, before the ground and creeping things had been created in this place. I put together (some) of them in Nun as weary ones, before I could find a place in which I might stand. It (seemed) advantageous to me in my heart; I planned with my face; and I made (in concept) every form when I was alone, before I had spat out what was Shu, before I had sputtered out what was Tefnut, and before (any) other had come into being who could act with me (*Book of Apophis*). ...

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<sup>78</sup> *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, "Proverbs," edited by Robert G. Hoerber, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1986, 943; R.N. Whybray, "Proverbs VIII 22-31 and Its Supposed Prototypes," from *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, edited by Prof. Harry M. Orlinsky, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., New York, New York, 1976, 504f; and Jacobsen, Thorkild, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1976, 167.

... When on high the heaven had not been named, // Firm ground below had not been called by name, // Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, // And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all, // Their waters commingling as a single body; // No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared, // When no gods whatever had been brought into being, // Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined-- // Then it was that the gods were formed within them. (*Enuma Elish*)<sup>79</sup>

In both instances what we have is a glorification of the supreme creator-god and the insurance of the victory of created order over chaos.<sup>80</sup> While both have a superficial resemblance to Proverbs 8, there are some key differences. In the *Book of Apophis*, it is not so much a statement about the creation of the world as it is a statement about how the supreme god Re came into being.<sup>81</sup> Wisdom in Proverbs assumes that Yahweh has always been around. There is no question as to how He came into being. Likewise, Proverbs 8 spends more time describing Yahweh's creative acts, His relationship to Wisdom, and Wisdom's reaction to Yahweh's creativity. Such is lacking in the *Book of Apophis*. Meanwhile, in *Enuma Elish*, the relationship between *Apsu* and *Mummu-Tiamat* is presented almost as a husband/wife relationship, where creation of the gods and the world is seen in terms of sex. Proverbs 8 is devoid of any such outlook, especially that of a mother-goddess who gives birth to the world. Furthermore, Whybray points out, this section of the *Enuma Elish* merely sets up a larger mythological narrative to point out the Babylonian god Marduk's acts within the universe, and not the antiquity or authority of Wisdom.<sup>82</sup> The only direct relationship that either *Book of Apophis* or *Enuma Elish* seems to share with Proverbs 8 is a general creation theme and a grammatical

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<sup>79</sup> R.N. Whybray, "Proverbs VIII 22-31 and Its Supposed Prototypes," 504-505.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 509.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 509.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

construction in the form of ‘When-Before-Not.’ Thus, along with Whybray, one can conclude that Proverbs 8 is unique to Israel and there is no direct cultural borrowing here.<sup>83</sup>

With this in mind, there are two final questions that come to the forefront. First, what purpose does Proverbs 8:22-31 have? Second, what does one make of the character Wisdom? The two questions can be considered together as they depend mutually upon one another.

Based upon what has been gathered so far, there are two general purposes to our text that also define who Wisdom is:

The first purpose comes from Proverbs 1:2-6:

For attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young --let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance-- for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. (NIV)

This is the main purpose of the book, to edify the reader. In this respect, Lady Wisdom becomes the main spokesperson for attaining the book’s purpose. She is the one who cries out in 1:20 for all to hear her insights. Why is she to be heard and given attention? Because what she speaks is true and just (Proverbs 8:6-9). Hearing and obeying her bestows all that she promises to those who will listen. More importantly, she alone was present when Yahweh created the world and stands in a unique relationship to Him --as evidenced in our text. She alone can then best express the mindset and heart of Yahweh. This parallels what the apostle John writes in the prologue of his gospel, especially verses 1, 2, and 18:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ... No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side has made him known.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> R.N. Whybray, “Proverbs VIII 22-31, 513.

<sup>84</sup> Martin Luther makes a similar connection when he discusses what is meant by the Word. He compares it to the “word of the heart,” that is speech which reflects the thoughts of the heart, which people express all the time. Luther

Taking John's gospel into account, Lady Wisdom is then not merely a personification of one of God's attributes, but the very *hypostasis* or the actual self-existing substance or persona of God's wisdom.<sup>85</sup> She becomes Yahweh's representative, where listening to her is the same as listening to Yahweh Himself. With such authority, Wisdom not only dispenses edification for the believer, but also can then become a point of contact between ancient Israel and other cultures, allowing Israel as it were to get its foot into the door in its missionary endeavors. For as we have already noted, similar books and views of Wisdom were already in existence in Egypt and Babylon. Proverbs and Lady Wisdom could create a bond between Israel and the other nations that is similar to the bond used when a believer uses the general revelation of nature to speak about God to an unbeliever.

Yet, in creating this common bond it does not ultimately lead to a one-on-one correspondence, especially when it comes to Wisdom. Goddess worship or any form of idolatry, as exhibited in other cultures, was repeatedly condemned in ancient Israel throughout its history (see, Deut. 6:4, 2Kings 23:6, Jer. 7:16-19, Ezk. 14:6). Nowhere in our text, or in Proverbs, does Wisdom ever claim to be Yahweh or that she should be worshipped like Yahweh. Instead, she describes her unique relationship with Yahweh and then points the reader back to Him as the only true God, who is the source of all wisdom. Thus Wisdom, while she may perform many roles within Proverbs like that of mother who nurtures faith, a wife or counselor who looks out for the best interests of those to whom they are devoted, is never viewed as a goddess by the ancient Israelites. Instead, she is seen more in terms of an authenticator of God's Word and

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notes that God likewise has his inner thoughts, conversations with Himself known to Himself. The expression of God's thoughts is what John calls the Word. The difference here, however, is "What He is, He is of Himself from eternity." This Word engages with God in His divine essence and reflects the thoughts of His heart. (Luther's Works, *Sermons on John: 1537-38*, AE 22:9f)

<sup>85</sup> Definition of *hypostasis* taken from Martin Chemnitz's, *The Two Natures in Christ*, translated by J.A.O. Preus, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1971, 91.

human tradition. Claudia Camp in her book, *Wisdom and the Feminine in Proverbs*, makes this observation when she writes:

Female Wisdom, therefore, not only represents but also theologically validates the human tradition. ...

...[For] the notion that a written tradition requires the authoritative validation of a single, divinely gifted individual is the norm in Israel. One need only think of the prophets and the prophetic books, David and the Psalms, or Moses and the Pentateuch. Reference to a female individual in this function may seem more surprising, but it is not without precedent in the Bible, where Huldah and Esther play similar roles.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore to read into Proverbs 8 a pre-Yahwistic polytheism and demythologization, as some radical feminist and critical scholars do, or to have prayers and worship directed to Sophia as the Reimaging Conference of 1993 did,<sup>87</sup> not only ignores the context of our text but also the entire history of the Old and New Testaments, which expressly and repeatedly condemn such views and practices.

Our hymn verse in question escapes similar condemnation because it links the name of Wisdom to that of Emmanuel, which we note in Matthew 1:23 is an exposition of the name of Jesus, "God is with us." In other words, one is to never think of the Wisdom of God apart from the name Emmanuel, Jesus of Nazareth, who as the Son of God is Wisdom Incarnate. Where such severance takes place, then the radical, neo-pagan views and practices are easily open to suggestion. The role of Christ is also reduced at best to that of only a prophet who speaks of heavenly knowledge and wisdom and not the divine Savior who reverses the chaotic effects of sin by His death and resurrection.

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<sup>86</sup> Camp, Claudia, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, from the "Bible and Literature Series," editor David M. Gunn, The Almond Press, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA, 1985, 141.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Wenz, "Sophia & Feminism," *Concordia Student Journal*, Vol. 18, Number 1, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Thanksgiving 1994, 15, citing Katherine Kersten, "How the Feminist Establishment Hurts Women," *Christianity Today*, 38:7, (June 20, 1994), 24, and Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined*, New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1986, 131.



From the evidence presented so far what we note is that Wisdom is a child of Yahweh, a hypostatization of His wisdom from eternity, and a master craftsman who works alongside Yahweh at the beginning of creation. She is Yahweh's spokesperson and the validator of His Word. In speaking that Word she then bestows life in all of its richness to those who will listen and accept the Word of the Lord. By noting these characteristics, the matrix is set up for Wisdom to become a type for Jesus Christ. Admittedly, this is somewhat controversial given the abuses that have occurred within the history of typology.

However, the parallels between Christ and Wisdom are so striking that it is very hard to deny this point, especially when one compares Proverbs 8 and John 1 along with St. Paul's reference in 1Cor. 1:24 that Jesus is called "The Wisdom of God." For example, Tobin notes the following parallels that occur between John's Gospel Prologue and Jewish wisdom literature in general:

Both the *logos* of the hymn in [John's] Prologue and wisdom in Jewish wisdom literature are with God in the beginning; both are involved in the creation of the world; both seek to find a place among humankind; both are within a Jewish tradition of speculation about the deeper meanings of the early chapters of Genesis. In addition, many of the parallels between the *logos* in the hymn [of John] and the figure of wisdom are found in passages which like the hymn are poetic in character (Prov. 8:22-31; Sir. 24). The parallels are not simply conceptual, but also stylistic.<sup>88</sup>

When it comes to the identification of Jesus with Wisdom, besides the parallels mentioned, what is then noted most is how both speak. In our passage, Wisdom always talks in terms of "me" or "I". Perkins has noted that in the "I am" passages of John, Jesus talks in much the same ways. "With the Fourth Gospel [then], Wisdom/Word Christology has become the vehicle for the explicit affirmation that Jesus is God."<sup>89</sup> This is reaffirmed by modern Judaism, in which the manner of Jesus' speaking and not the content stands out as foremost --even though

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<sup>88</sup> Thomas Tobin, "Logos," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. by D.N. Freedman, IV (New York: 1992), 348-356.

<sup>89</sup> Pheme Perkins, "Jesus: God's Wisdom," *Word and World*, 279.

it rejects Jesus as either the Messiah or Son of God. Swedish rabbi, Marcus Eherenpreis has noted the following:

A difference [between Jesus and the Jewish rabbis] appears immediately that from the very beginning constituted an unbridgeable wall between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus spoke in his own name. Judaism, on the other hand, knew only one *I*, the divine *Anochi* (the Hebrew word for *I*) who gave us the eternal commandments at Sinai. No other superhuman *I* has existed in Judaism other than God. Jesus' sermons begin, "I say to you." The prophets of Israel introduced their preaching, "Thus says the Lord." Here is a clash that goes to the inner core of religion. Jesus' voice had an alien sound that Jewish ears had never heard before. For Judaism, only the revealed teaching of God was important, not the teacher's personal ego. Moses and the prophets were human beings encumbered with shortcomings. Hillel and his successors sat where Moses sat. Every learned scholar is a link in an unbroken chain of tradition that stretched from Moses to our own time. Jesus seemingly snaps this chain and begins a new one. A man arose in Israel who cried, "I say to you." This was the strange and new element that arose between Jesus and the Pharisees.<sup>90</sup>

From this observation Jesus has burst all the known categories of beings with Judaism.

Jesus could be seen as a prophet and a man of prayer, but He is more than that. Likewise Jesus could be seen as a teacher, but with such authority that he not only could be alongside God's law, but even be above it. Jesus could also utter words with creative power. Oscar Skarsaune, in his book *Incarnation: Myth or Fact*, concludes from this that only one category within Judaism could even begin to contain a being with that much power: *Lady Sophia*. Jesus lives and acts in such a way as to make it impossible for him not to be identified with *Lady Sophia*.<sup>91</sup>

However, there are two key differences between the two. First, "Neither Jewish wisdom literature nor the kind of Hellenistic Jewish speculation represented by Philo ever sought to identify either wisdom or *logos* with a specific human being."<sup>92</sup> John's gospel does precisely that when in verse 14 he writes, "And the Word became flesh (σὰρξ) and dwelt (σκηνοῶ) among us and we beheld his glory, glory as the Only Begotten from God, full of grace and truth"

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<sup>90</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, translated by Trygve R. Skarsten, Concordia Scholarship Today, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1991, 33.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>92</sup> Tobin, "Logos," 355.

(John 1:14, translation Mine). We have already seen how *Lady Sophia* could dwell among men. John picks up on that element in the second portion of verse 14. What is new and unique within John is his usage of σαρξ.

Schweizer notes most succinctly what John is trying to say here:

In 1:13 σαρξ is the principle of natural birth as distinct from birth of God. To the σαρξ is ascribed a will, so that it is parallel to ανηρ (a male human being/husband) rather than αιματα (blood). It thus embraces, not an anatomically distinct part of the body, but the whole man as the one who stands over against God, not possessing salvation. σαρξ εγενετο (1:14) does not mean that the Logos took upon Himself the sin of the world. ... It tells us that the self-revealing took the form of man and did not merely bear it as a vesture but became identical with it in order that those born of God might see the δοξα of the Father both in the patent if misunderstood miracles and also in the obedience of Jesus even to the cross.<sup>93</sup>

What John does here then is unite the human and divine natures together in the person of Christ. John starts the beginning of his Prologue, like Proverbs 8, by pointing the reader back to Genesis 1: God and the Creation story. Then, throughout the rest of the Prologue, John works with the themes found in Proverbs 8:22-31 showing that Jesus parallels Wisdom who serves as His type. Jesus is to be seen as the pre-existent and eternal Son of God who creates the world and gives life to all who have faith in Him.

However, with John's mention of the Word becoming σαρξ he has shown that Jesus is definitely the anti-type to Wisdom. Even though Jesus is the eternal life-giving Creator, who reveals the Father, he has a definite place in human history. He is born as a man in a specific time and place: the land of Judea, during the reign of Caesar Augustus. Jesus comes to a specific group of people who are his own, the Jews, to bring the message of salvation. He can actually be seen and felt in concrete physical terms and can identify with us as human beings in every

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<sup>93</sup> Schweizer, "Sarx," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. 7, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted April 1988, 139.

respect except for sin. These are not characteristics or attributes of *Sophia*, who is often viewed by many feminist theologians as a type of “Weltgeist” or “Everyman.”<sup>94</sup> While it may be argued that maleness is not essential for the “christic role” of Jesus, or even for God, nevertheless John and the rest of the New Testament writers clearly state that the Christ as the divine Wisdom of God is always to be seen in the work and historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. For example, St. Peter states in Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other [save Jesus of Nazareth], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Thus it becomes important to see Jesus as being both true God and true man. For without this recognition not only does any talk about Jesus as Wisdom Incarnate become absurd, but the entire New Testament message of justification by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone becomes meaningless also.

The other connection between *Sophia* and Jesus is their role in salvation history. We have already noted that in Proverbs a connection is made with regards to salvation when *Sophia* extends the message of life to those who will hear her. In Proverbs 8:35-36 she states, “For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD. But whoever sins against Me harms himself; all those who hate Me love death” (God’s Word To The Nations; hereafter GWTN). This salvation theme is heightened when *Sophia* says to those who would prefer *Dame Folly’s* counsel, “But he does not know that the souls of those who died are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell” (GWTN). *Sophia’s* wisdom is meant to give favor from God and life everlasting. Through her one obtains such blessings. This parallels the thoughts in John’s Gospel where through Jesus, “. . .we all received also blessing upon blessing. For the law had been given through Moses, but grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16-17, Translation mine). Later in the same gospel, Jesus himself states, “I have come so that they may

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<sup>94</sup> Wenz, “Σοφία & Feminism,” *Concordia Student Journal*, 20.

have life and have it to the fullest” (John 10:10, translation mine). Thus, Jesus is truly a spokesman for *Sophia*, as Perkins has noted, because their goals are one and the same.<sup>95</sup>

Yet, even though Jesus and *Sophia*'s goals are one and the same, there is a crucial difference as St. Paul notes in 1Cor. 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved.” Fee notes in his commentary, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, “There is a *logos* (speech) that belongs to wisdom and there is a *logos* whose content is the cross; but they are mutually exclusive.”<sup>96</sup> In other words, there is a major difference between the proclamation of life from *Sophia* and that of Jesus. As Wenz points out, “Another characteristic of *Sophia* and Jesus identified by feminist theologians is that both are sent by God to announce God’s love for humanity.” There would certainly be no argument here. Some feminists have even been able to connect *Sophia* and Christ’s work on the Cross as a part of that revelation of God’s love for humanity. “The greatest revelation of *Sophia* in Christ’s work is ‘the Cross [which] is part of the larger mystery of pain-to-life, of that struggle for the new creation so evocative of the rhythm of pregnancy, delivery, and birth, so familiar to women of all times.”<sup>97</sup> However, *Sophia* never claims that she must die or will die in order to bring this life as Jesus does (see, Matt 16:21, Matt. 26:1-2, Mark 10:45, Luke 24:7, John 6:48, John 10:15-18).

The image of the cross as part of a birth process is thought provoking and recalls these words of Christ, “But I have a baptism to be baptized in, and how I am in distress until it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50, translation mine). However, what the feminists have seemingly

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<sup>95</sup> PHEME PERKINS, “Jesus: God’s Wisdom,” *Word and World*, 279.

<sup>96</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, from “The New International Commentary on the New Testament,” edited by Ned Stonehouse et al., Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, 68.

<sup>97</sup> WENZ, “Σοφία & Feminism,” *Concordia Student Journal*, Vol. 18, Number 1, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, Thanksgiving 1994, 20, citing Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1983, 157-159.

failed to take into account is that the message of the cross is an offensive one no matter how one chooses to interpret it according to Scripture. St. Paul writes, “For we proclaim Christ crucified, which for the Jews is a scandal and to the Gentiles madness” (1Corinthians 1:23, translation mine). Fee notes, “From any merely human perspective, the central message of the Christian gospel must always appear as folly.... [For] Christ crucified as God’s power, and therefore God’s wisdom, at work in the world is the ultimate contradiction.”<sup>98</sup> In other words there cannot be, according to Scripture, any softening of the Christian message in order to make it more palatable and sensible to those who would receive it. The work and person of Jesus Christ must be accepted as it is or else rejected. Thus without the revelation of Scripture that Jesus of Nazareth is God’s wisdom it would be pointless to connect *Sophia* and Christ together. For Christ dies, but *Sophia* does not. Yet in proclaiming Jesus as God’s wisdom, what Paul really shows is how the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. The message of eternal life, which is declared both by Jesus and *Sophia*, is demonstrated only most clearly in what is considered seemingly ridiculous and scandalous by the world: the work and person of Jesus of Nazareth –who died on a cross, but by God’s power was raised to life for the salvation of all.

It is in understanding who Jesus really is and what He does that aids us in understanding who *Sophia* is and what her work is all about. In Proverbs 8:22-31 *Sophia* points to Yahweh and His work. She is God’s representative who proclaims God’s message of life. As the Son of God, the same also holds true for Jesus in His life, death and resurrection. For existing from eternity and coming from heaven, it is He alone who reveals the heart of the Father and His will for us: that we should live forever joyfully in His presence. As such, ultimately then, *Sophia* seeks to direct us not to herself, but to Jesus only whose work and person is regarded in the New Testament as being truly God’s Wisdom and Word Incarnate. In conclusion, without Jesus

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<sup>98</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 76-77.

Christ *Sophia* remains forever a mysterious figure whose words and actions serve no real and lasting purpose. Yet, in the light of Christ, *Sophia* is no longer a tantalizing mystery, but an image and type for Jesus in whom the Scriptures declare, “He had been made Wisdom for us from God, that is, [our] righteousness, holiness, and redemption” (1Corinthians 1:30, translation mine).

### Early Church History

In the first four centuries of the Church’s history, Wisdom theology was instrumental for the Church’s understanding of Christology. Of primary importance here was how to preserve Old Testament monotheism while at the same time declaring Jesus to be God along with God the Father. The lessons the Church learned about Jesus as the ‘Wisdom of God’ through the Scriptures also helped the Church, particularly in the East, develop precision in its theological language and development of the Nicene Creed. It is the purpose of this section to highlight some of the lessons learned by the Church of the first four centuries in order to discover how they may prove helpful for us today in confessing Jesus as ‘the Wisdom of God.’

The first lesson comes from the Apologists of the second century A.D., who were engaged in discussing the relationship between God and idolatry with those around them.<sup>99</sup> For example, Justin Martyr shows to Trypho the Jew, in his book *Dialogues with Trypho*, that the Bible mentions a person, not only called God and Lord but also Wisdom and Glory, who is different from God the Father. To this idea Trypho responds favorably.<sup>100</sup> As we have seen Judaism could think of different personified aspects of God that served as His agents in both creation and salvation. However, when Justin next tries to demonstrate that this person became a

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<sup>99</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 46.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

human being in Jesus, Trypho reacts negatively. Skarsaune notes, “What was scandalous for Judaism in wisdom Christology was not the implied plurality of structure within the essence of God, but from a Jewish perspective, the overstepping of the boundary between God and humanity which the Incarnation implied.”<sup>101</sup> In other words, Wisdom Christology was offensive to Judaism because it pointed to a specific individual and not some abstract philosophy behind it. Today, this is sometimes known as the ‘scandal of particularity.’

This is the main problem for many feminist theologians. Many of them are able to see Jesus as a historical figure, who goes around preaching the love of God. However, to say that the same Jesus is also God causes problems for feminist theologians. The main problem they argue is that, “the unwarranted idea develops that there is a necessary ontological connection between the maleness of Jesus’ historical person and the maleness of *Logos* as the male offspring and disclosure of a male God. The female figure of divine wisdom is displaced from the orthodox Trinity.”<sup>102</sup> We have already noted that maleness is not an essential characteristic for the role of Christ. At the same, however, neither is the female figure of divine wisdom displaced by the orthodox Trinity. Instead it is assumed into the work and person of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, who is considered by Scripture to be both the *Logos* and *Sophia* of God. While Justin Martyr shows that orthodox Christians cannot get around the “scandal of particularity” neither are they at a loss to speak about Jesus in both masculine and feminine characteristics while at the same time fully maintaining that He was a male human being. Scripture provides the framework in which to do so and orthodox Christianity seeks to stick within that framework without doing violence to what the Scriptures say by reading something into Scripture that is not there or else contradicts other clear parts of Scripture.

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<sup>101</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 46-47.

<sup>102</sup> Wenz, “Σοφία & Feminism,” *Concordia Student Journal*, 20, citing Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 117.



In the third century A.D., Wisdom Christology began to broaden its scope of understanding where discussion was focused primarily in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Paul of Samosata held to an adoptionistic view of Jesus as the Son of God. While he did not reject the idea of the Logos/Wisdom concept, Paul equated them with those qualities which could be ascribed to any individual. Neither the Logos nor Wisdom had any independent existence alongside of God.<sup>103</sup> As such, God's divine wisdom in Jesus was simply a divine power residing in Him.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Paul of Samosata maintained that Wisdom and the Word were greater than Christ and separate from him.

Paul of Samosata thereby anticipated Nestorius' views of two separate, divided natures within Christ nearly two centuries beforehand.<sup>105</sup> His theology, however, forced the Church to define what it meant when the terms *hypostasis* and *prosopon* were used to describe Christ's being, which is still important for today's Christological discussion. A *hypostasis* came to be understood as the collective attributes by which a person/thing manifests itself as one object or individual. *Prosopon*, while closely connected with *hypostasis*, came to be understood more in terms of an individual personality. For Paul of Samosata, the Father and the Logos were one *prosopon* and not two *hypostases*. As a result Paul's views were rejected as heretical at a synod in Antioch in 268 A.D., because he did not do justice to John 1:14 which talks about the Word *becoming flesh* and not simply dwelling within it.<sup>106</sup> In looking at Paul of Samosata, what becomes important in the Christological debates with feminism is precision in language and a recognition of the uniqueness of Jesus as the Word becoming flesh. Where one fails to recognize these things, then the discussion of who Jesus is not only becomes confusing, but also meaningless.

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<sup>103</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 82.

<sup>104</sup> Bengt Hagglund, *History of Theology*, 70.

<sup>105</sup> Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 83.

The greatest representative of Wisdom Christology in the East before the Council of Nicea was Origen (185-255 A.D.) Skarsaune states the following concerning Origen's Christology:

As the Wisdom of God (Proverbs 8:22ff, Wisdom 7:22ff), Christ is God's image (*eikon*) from everlasting to everlasting, having proceeded from God in an "eternal birth," an ongoing generation. He contains in Himself God's creative thought and functions as the agent of creation. Origen's "image" concept explains why his Christology contained two contradictory tendencies that would generate sharp debate and unrest among his followers: Christ as God's image can be understood to mean that Christ is in every regard *like God* so that the image is identical with the original. But it can also be understood in the sense that Christ is only an image of God and in a certain sense *less* than God. Both of these tendencies are found in Origen. During the Arian Controversy both sides could cite selected passages in Origen in their own defense.<sup>107</sup>

These christological views led Origen to the idea of the Logos who was united to a preexistent human soul. Through the Incarnation, both were united in a human body. As a result of the Logos-soul concept, the incarnate Christ had no separate, personal ego. His ego was that of the Logos. This view would lead Apollinaris to say around 361 A.D. that Jesus had no human soul, a view condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D.<sup>108</sup> Origen's views led to a further clarification within Christology: the idea of "nature," or φύσις, soon came to be realized as a self-animating, living essence that can exist by itself because its life principle is within itself.<sup>109</sup>

Wisdom Christology came to its fullest expression in the Arian controversy of the fourth century that led to the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. This controversy broke out in 318 A.D. in what started out as a public debate between Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and his presbyter Arius. Shortly after the debate began it engulfed the entire Eastern Church. The controversy

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<sup>106</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 81-82.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

appears to have started when Alexander made some statements about the unity of the Son with the Father that sounded Sabellian, a mere switching of names within the Godhead, and seemed to break away from Origen's orthodox views, in Arius' opinion. Alexander was quoted as saying, "The Son is (always) unborn in the Father. He is born outside of time, born to be unborn. The Father is not outside the Son, neither in our thoughts or in time. There is always the Father, always the Son. The Son is from God Himself."<sup>110</sup>

What had been fundamental to Origen's views on God was the concept of "that which is without a beginning." For Arius there was only one logical conclusion for this notion. The only one who could be described in this fashion was God the Father. If it belongs to the Father not to have an origin, then it could not be that the Son is without a beginning since His origin is in the Father. On a philosophical as well as sociological level, Arius felt duty bound to say that there was a point when the Son was not --ην ποτε οτε ουκ ην.<sup>111</sup>

In the course of events, what Arius really taught can be summed up in the following:

1. God, the Only One, besides whom there is no other, is alone unbegotten and eternal. He has created all things out of His free will, and there exists nothing beside Him that He has not created. The expression "to beget" is simply a synonym for "to create." Wisdom and Logos dwell within this God as the powers (not persons) that are coincident with His substance and by very nature inseparable from it. Besides these there are many created powers. God created an independent substance as the instrument to create the world, since the world would not have been able to endure the contact of the Godhead. The Bible calls this being Wisdom, Son, Image and Word.
2. As such there is no actual relationship between the Father and Son. The Son is capable of change. Therefore the Son is not truly god. However, while the Son is a creature he stands in a special relationship through adoption so that by God's grace and his own steady progress he became God in the nominal sense.
3. The incarnation shows that Christ is a being capable of change, who must attain to perfection.

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<sup>110</sup> Oscar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 98.

<sup>111</sup> Hagglund, *History of Theology*, 75.

4. The Holy Spirit is a separate created being, who came into existence by the Son and is subordinate to Him.<sup>112</sup>

To support these beliefs Arius appealed to a number of Scripture passages like: Deut. 6:4, Deut. 32:39, Prov. 8:22, Ps. 45:8, Matt. 12:28, Matt. 26:41, Matt. 28:18, Mark 13:32, Luke 2:52, Luke 18:19, John 11:34, John 14:28, John 17:3, Acts 2:36, 1Cor. 1:24, 1Cor. 15:28, Col. 1:15, Phil. 2:6f, Heb. 1:4, Heb. 3:2.<sup>113</sup> A number of these citations contain some reference to Wisdom. However, as one reviews Arius' teachings, it soon becomes clear that he discards what earlier Church fathers had done with Wisdom Christology. For instance, Skarsaune notes that the only use Arius had for traditional Wisdom Christology was the verb "created" (Greek: *εκτισεν*) from the Septuagint version of Proverbs 8:22.<sup>114</sup> While Arius claimed to be using Scripture to support his views, in reality he did not. From a philosophical level, G.C. Stead has noted that Arius' notion that the Son has no part of God nor was from some lower essence of God can be readily connected "with the Stoic opinion that rational man as such is *μερος θεου*, and with the opinion of many Platonists that God made the world *εξ υποκειμενου τινος*."<sup>115</sup> Stead further notes on Arius' notion of time,

It might seem disingenuous to speak of 'before' and 'after' while professing to exclude the notion of time. But Arius' position has an obvious basis in Plato's *Timaeus*, see 38 b, *χρονος δ' ουν μετ' ουρανου γεγονεν...*<sup>116</sup>

Arius' views were then reinforced on a sociological level as Church father Athanasius tells us when Arius asked women, "Did you have a son before bearing? now, as thou hadst not,

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<sup>112</sup> Harnack, Adolph. *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, translated from the Third German Edition by Neil Buchanan, Russell and Russell, New York, 1958-1961, 14-19.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>114</sup> Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?*, 99.

<sup>115</sup> Stead, G.C. "The Platonism of Arius," from *The Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, vol. XV, edited Rev. Dr. H. Chadwick and Rev. Dr. H.F.D. Sparks, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964, 24.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

so neither was the Son of God before His generation.”<sup>117</sup> When Arius therefore took his lead from popular philosophy and sociology he did not come up with Jesus Christ as He is presented in Scripture, but only what Arius thought Jesus should be according to reason and common sense. Because of the fact that Arius’ views broke with traditional Wisdom Christology, Alexander excommunicated Arius on the grounds of heresy.<sup>118</sup> The Church condemned Arianism in 318 A.D. with the drafting of the Nicene creed which made it explicitly clear that Jesus is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made.”

For many people today, the doctrinal controversies of the Early Church seem to be a lot of quibbling over hair-splitting formulas that involved esoteric Scripture passages, such as the ones outlined in this paper. However, they seem to forget what the Early Church was fighting for when it engaged in such battles. The Arian Controversy, with its claim to a solid Scriptural foundation, was revealed to be resting actually on philosophy and sociology based upon what Arius thought was acceptable and reasonable. Paul Felix, Sr., notes that this hermeneutic is still present today in much of feminist theology, when he quotes evangelical feminist Robert Johnston:

It is the reader who uses incomplete knowledge as the basis of judgment. It is the reader who chooses between equally valid possibilities based on *personal preference* (Italicization added). It is the reader who develops criteria for what is universal and what is culturally specific, what is translatable and what is transcultural. It is the reader who brings to a text a specific understanding of Scripture’s overarching unity. It is the reader who finds it difficult to remain vulnerable to the text as it confronts Christian and pagan alike.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, 1.7.22, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, vol. 4: “St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters,” edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, The Christian Literature Company, NYC, NY, 1892, 320.

<sup>118</sup> Hagglund, *History of Theology*, 76.

<sup>119</sup> Robert K. Johnston, “Biblical Authority and Interpretation: The Test Case of Women’s Role in the Church and Home Updated,” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. by Alveia Mickelsen (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986) 35, quoted in Paul Felix, Sr., “The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism, in *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 5/2, Los Angeles, CA, (Fall 1994), 159-184.

The lesson that the Early Church learned here was that sound hermeneutical principles based on what the Scriptures say for themselves and not preconceived notions of what a text ought to say are important for understanding clearly and properly its message about Jesus Christ. Yet, the Arian Controversy over Christology was much more than a battle on how to interpret the Bible. It was also a heated debate over soteriology or “How are we saved and why?” For example, Athanasius in his battle against Arius develops his arguments in this way:

1. If Arius is correct in saying that Christ is just a created being and not of the same substance as the Father, then salvation would be impossible since God alone can save us. He must come down to our level in order to raise us up to His.
2. Why, when the Father created us, does He seek a mediator at all, as if His will did not suffice to constitute whatever seemed good to Him? If the Father in Arius’ teaching is only God and an omnipotent one, then the Son becomes superfluous in the whole scheme of things.
3. As a result, Arius’ teachings involved the worship of creation or faith in more than one God which the Church had always rejected.<sup>120</sup>

As such the battles the Early Church fought here were necessary ones because they involved the issue of salvation and confessing who Christ was and is. As we ourselves are faced in the feminist theological debate on how to confess Jesus Christ as the θεανθρωπος we begin to learn how to combat many of the same heresies that confront us today by looking at what Scripture teaches for itself. By examining the passages from Wisdom literature we begin to understand how the Church fathers arrived at their Christology. For in dealing with Christ as the Wisdom of God they help keep us focused on not only who Jesus really is, the Son of God in the flesh crucified for us, but why the message of the Gospel matters at all: For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

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<sup>120</sup> Hagglund, *History of Theology*, 80.

## Conclusion

We conclude this paper by returning to the beginning of it with the questions Dr. Ji raised. First, is the second stanza of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” heretical? From the evidence that has been examined the answer is no. In the evidence we have reviewed there is a solid and sound Scriptural foundation for addressing Jesus as the Wisdom of God, reinforced by orthodox Early Church History. By staying within these parameters the antiphon is a sound exposition and confession of Jesus as the Wisdom of God.

Second, was it appropriate for *Lutheran Worship* to include this stanza given the current debates on the gender of God and Sophia. The answer here is yes. For this ‘O Antiphon’ is not meant as a glorification of some Sophia-goddess, but of Jesus Christ, who is God’s Wisdom and our Immanuel in the flesh. It celebrates the fact that God the Son who created this world mightily by His word came into it in order to teach and show us true knowledge of God and to cause God’s glory in saving the world through Him to grow. By dropping this antiphon a rich part of the Church’s heritage would be lost. Dropping it would also leave open the supposed accusation, “The major ‘crime’ of Christianity has been the conscious erasure of subtle feminine images while making patriarchal images the dominant metaphor.”<sup>121</sup> This antiphon demonstrates on a practical level how orthodox Christianity can confess a so-called ‘feminine image’ of Christ without violating the letter or spirit of the Scriptures. The antiphon is of immense aid in understanding properly who Jesus is as the Wisdom of God so that given even the current debates on the gender of God and Sophia the person and work of Jesus as God’s Wisdom may be properly understood and confessed.

Finally, is this verse liable to misunderstanding? In the Latin text before us, the answer is no. There are no references whatsoever to God as mother/daughter or any pronouns of “she/her.” The misunderstanding seems to come from the English translation where the “her” may possibly be a reference back to the Latin feminine word *viam* or in English “path.” The translation that we have comes from John Mason Neale in his book *Mediaeval Hymns and Sequences* published in 1851. When the book *Hymns Ancient and Modern* came out in 1861, Neale’s translation was used in an altered form.<sup>122</sup> Thus the English text we have before us seems to be somewhat free and in parts not as faithful to the original Latin text as it could easily be. With our text in question the last phrase, “and teach us in her ways to go,” could be left standing as is were it not for the current debates on the perceived gender of God. Philip Melanchthon is therefore correct when he points out in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, “Nothing can be said so carefully that it can avoid misrepresentation.”<sup>123</sup> What should then be done with this stanza is a reexamination of the original Latin text and a new translation produced that is not only faithful and accurate to the original text, but fitting to the melody as well. In conclusion, I propose the following possible translation for the last line of stanza 2, along with the refrain. This translation seeks to be faithful to the goals outlined. It also seeks to retain in essence all that is so well familiar and loved about this hymn right now, but to speak in a way that is clearer and gives all glory to Christ as the Wisdom of God for us:

O Come, our Wisdom from on high

Who ordered all things mightily;

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<sup>121</sup> Wenz, “Σοφία & Feminism,” *Concordia Student Journal*, 21.

<sup>122</sup> Fred Precht, *Lutheran Worship: Hymnal Companion*, prepared under the auspices of The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1992, 38.



To us the path of knowledge show  
And cause the Father's glory to grow.

*Refrain:* Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel  
Shall come to you, O Israel.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Apology to AC VII and VIII, 2, 168, Tappert edition.

<sup>124</sup> A somewhat more free, although perhaps preferred translation for the last line of the refrain might be: "Is born for you, O Israel." The Latin has for "Shall Come," *nascetur*, future, passive indicative, 3 sg., *nasci*, "to be born." Technically, while the tense does not allow one to translate the refrain in the present, the word choice of *nascetur* with its imagery could allow for some poetic license here. To translate the refrain in this slightly more free way would strengthen the argument that in stanza 2, Jesus is to be seen here as God's Wisdom Incarnate. It would also show throughout the hymn that we rejoice in the Savior who has come to us by His birth at Bethlehem and that we look forward to His Second Coming.

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